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CONTENTS

EDITORIAL: *page* 67

JAMES KIRKUP: *The Giant God* 68

JOHN HEATH-STUBBS: *Invocations for a Traveller* 69

NICHOLAS MOORE: *The Uz-Guz of Tuz* 70

FRANCIS CABUCHE: *Music for the Beast* 71

THOMAS GOOD: *Jerusalem* 72

ANTHONY KERRIGAN: *Call for the Clown's Face* 73

EDGAR FOXALL: *The Sea* 74

GORDON WHARTON: *The Plague* 75

CHRIS BJERKNES: *The Sponge of Space* 76

NOEL WELCH: *Poem* 77

ALEC CRAIG: *Sodom* 78

GRAHAM ACKROYD: *One* 80

ROBIN ATTHILL: *Catullus XI* page 82
CHARLES EDWARD EATON: *Willow Rose* 82
OSWELL BLAKESTON: *The Loved Ones* 83
ANDREW SALKEY: *Excerpt from a Journal* 84
REVIEWS: 86
WREY GARDINER: *Journal (Continued)* 95

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EDITORIAL

GOOD writing as opposed to the cleverly advertised product of the popular journals has generally survived through the stubborn patronage of a few independent forces who have refused to bow to the judgment of current powers. A publishing house like Messrs. Faber can afford to stem the stream of passing opinion and publish with consistency an upopular poet—unpopular for no reasons connected with poetry—such as Ezra Pound. They have made the whole of his work available in this country now with PERSONAE, a collected edition of his shorter poems. Reading Ezra at this moment is to admit that a great deal of modern poetry has dug its own grave. It is possible to read *Homage to Sextus Propertius* with pleasure over a bottle of wine. Much of what is written today would qualify for a quick shot at the waste paper basket followed by an overwhelming desire to depart to bed.

In spite of the few established publishers who are able and willing to help literature it is still the small uncommercial press that has the power and the knowledge to print work which may survive into another time. And poetry is not only something measured in lines of equal or varying length. It is often written in prose. The Gabberbochus Press have given us in *This Room Before Sunrise* by Hugo Manning a work that was very well worth rescuing from the contemporary apathy and dejection of good writers. It should be published in America and translated into French, for after all, New York, London and Paris still harbour the lunatics who keep real literature alive in an incredible world of insanatory madmen.

Your editor is departing on his yearly caravan in the direction of the Niger and hopes to return in time to edit the Winter issue if he has not been swallowed by a crocodile or died of yellow fever.

JAMES KIRKUP

The Giant God

There, beyond me in the desert, in the sea's wilderness
Against me, and within me in the sun; impossible,
But true; benevolent, but stern; and happy in the summits
of his day,
There is the god, the giant. Though I am lost beside him,
He considers me, with a divine concern, and lets me lie
Securely in the hollow of his neck, as in a harboured boat,
Where I can hear, beneath the golden skin,
The great blood shouting down his veins,
And feel in slumber the working of his throat
That rocks me gently as the wines we revel in.

When we are sleeping, along the mountains of the afternoon,
His breathing echoes mine, the heart he has
Beats no more swiftly than my own; is blenched
Like mine, with the alarm the hunters sound,
Throbs harder with the drums' excitement, rages
With the anger of desire, pants in fierce games,
Is calmed by sleep and music, made to ache by hope.
When he moves, at night, he seems to make the stars
descend
Behind the hillside of a shoulder. He is the wave that drowns
And saves. He shows me how I should behave.

It is for him, holding out his arms, to let the sun
Appear, or no. His ribbed flanks are the dunes
Of the high seas moving under the flowing
Robes of water, and his limbs are rivers
That pour from the lake at the centre of the world,
Run through the deltas of his hands and feet into
The sun's drenched hair. His grave lips
Smile, and are parted, and within
Their rosy labyrinths the tongue's mute eloquence,
The white-on-crimson of the teeth mysteriously promise.

Sometimes he takes me in his hand,
And brings me to his level eyes, whose lashes

Fan me with visions that are gales of glances.
All my days are there: in that immortal sky I see
My mortal self, held high above a blue and blinding pool
That clouds with dazzled lids, and clears
With laughter, weeps with rains of stars. No word
Is spoken, and we have no names, or anything.
He is the giant and the god. I am the bird whose forest and
whose tree he is,
And that he teaches, with eternal silences, to briefly sing.

JOHN HEATH-STUBBS

Invocations for a Traveller

Because your beauty is betrayed and strayed
In the cross grain of the stars,
I invoke the ambiguous veiled Venuses
In all their avatars,
Not turning away their eyes,
Averse, in the smoke of my sighs,
To clapperclaw far from your path the boredoms and
jealousies.

I request the North Sea to dance and dandle you,
With his quorum of dulcet-eyed daughters,
While my huge tears like oil fall down
Upon your troubled waters;
On your course may they sustain you,
Bring pearls to entertain you,
Yet should you turn backwards your prow, presume
not to detain you.

May the October sun, hastening scorpionwards,
Husband his blood to warm you;
The leash of the hunter's moon lie easy
On the tides where those ladies charm you;
All sour planets of insanity
Sweat balm for your marred humanity,
For you sail by the lowlands low, who are but golden
in vanity.

NICHOLAS MOORE

The Uz-Guz of Tuz

Four weeping Willies
Under the hum-gum tree
Went you-me, you-me, you-me,
Until the great equivocal cavalier
With his shining eye dissolved in a flood of tears:

And I looked at the smart and weeping atmosphere
As at an ancient holy tale of fear.

A god descended in some cluttered shower
That ancient day unto the maiden's bower,
All twined with fat, flat flowers of clematis,
And stole her maidenhood upon a kiss.

The dim snake rattled in the undergrowth:
Love was a god that killed him at a stroke.

But, speak of Nineveh and Tyre
And all the tireless triremes which
Across the salty sea-blue skies
Rode, reckless of their empiries—
Weapons of gold or steel or such
The ageless and the rich
Against the common people use
In the almighty empire's fires,
Morgans and Fords of long ago,
Whose flickering figures creak and go . . .

And it is the kingdom of the willow
Whose golden tears weep leaves of green
Among the shining suns of summer,
And dip gold tresses in the stream;
O Undine, my lost Undine.

Where, under Pharaoh too,
The bat and ball
Flicker among the nets upon the wall,

And in the hieroglyphs of tomb and cave
Show game or zoo,
Hunt, art, and basket-ball—a view
Of timeless treasure all our leisures have:
Joy under the cherry-tree:
Sails on the sea.)

I remember, too, face of a golden trull,
The waterspout, the whirligig, the whirlpool,
And those who had a greater world to save.

Plant four black sempervivum on my grave,
Donnerswurz, roof protectors, on my head,
The ever-living from the roof of the world
To keep a bare life over the ever-dead.
And let one show one year its flower of sulphur,
Eyes of the gods; tears for no greater lover;
In a year of grace
And satisfying peace.

FRANCIS CABUCHE

Music for the Beast

He tucked his fiddle underneath his chin
And played a muted passage from Messiah,
While all his seven children watched his tears
And how his fumbling fingers rose
To hover just a shade of pitch. They sighed;
And Handel, who must shuffle from the grave
To face his music, stood as patiently
As Judas waiting for the chance to hang
His harpsichord upon a willow tree and sleep.

THOMAS GOOD

Jerusalem

Seen from the plain in miniature of white,
Beauty's bare neck exposed among the green,
Broods the surviving city;
For us records the consummation of the dream.

Defying Judas and the spurned tree,
The cult of blood and craft of mystery,
Violence of blood and sword,
Easter prevails;
Whose brighter image charms the troubled light
Of sanctuaries and the uncertain night.

Blind as the wind in their contention,
Today's expediencies of creed and state
Preserve the tumult;
In fiendish desecration and debate
Vandals of beauty assume the heinous course
Envenoming love's tranquil mission at the source.

Faith is from heaven, if it must be told,
Engraved in versions of the heart,
The monument is temporal;
Bigot, impostor may efface its part,
Annul the prophet in his sacred art.
The healing grace, the sanctifying calm
Are unseen presences, arrive endowed
To renovate the rust upon the gold.

This miracle may triumph still,
Like spring upon the winter of desire,
Or desolation follow on the famine and the fire;
In us the truth and the believing
In us the end and the beginning
In us the light and the perceiving.

Outside the antique ruins and walls,
The involuntary beggar and the precocious drudge

Find no abiding city now;
Dupes of the promised coalition,
They are guests of the stars
To wrinkle too early,
Tottering within crumbling bones,
No ease for them in pamphlets, no loaves in stones.

ANTHONY KERRIGAN

Call for the Clown's Face

Under what tent fold, then,
lies the turquoise fool in stupor

cap's peak caved and silver 'wry
his last night's words unstyed

tassle tinfoil tongue unstrung
to the sound of unsuspected Haydn.

O please poupée, poupine, pouponne
push back preponderance of the sun

—your sexless fate cries out aloud
the grenadine of bleak dawn strut

where run-down toy loves
leave the leaves behind the trees—

accept the relay's tin horn gift
turn to, at the Unknown's funeral pyre,

leave not the tasseled horses' manes
unstrung from off the hussars' halberds

recoil the spended silver foil
to lead the careless maundering coil.

EDGAR FOXALL

The Sea

Now it was at midnight first
they heard the boom booming
of the sea.

At midnight when the clocks
in distant churches spoke
with one voice, telling

Of the hour of sleep, or fear
or pain or dull waiting for
tomorrow when nothing occurs.

However that may be, it was
at midnight they heard the
boom boom boom

Of the sea before them. What
were they doing there? It
is a question

One may legitimately ask.
They were seeking a way
of escape

One with a loaded gun, the
other with a copy of Dante

Bulging in his pocket. At
that hour when the sea first
spoke to them like a lovely
mistress.

They saw it at twelve fifteen,
dark and heavy with a
splendid foam.

Like a wood of whispering trees;
fingers of jade in the lace of
old Seville.

Like that peace after suffering
which comes to the wise. Like
fire in the soul.

It was the sea. It was enough.
The sea—Old Pagan—father
of the world.

Monuments and towers and
cities of the blest. It
was the speaking sea.

An inferno behind them
one threw away his gun
and the other withdrew

From his pocket the book.
And there in the starlight
they eagerly read of
salvation.

GORDON WHARTON

The Plague

The plague walked on the wrong side of the mountain
through every house, following the whores,
in the land with one dried river and a dying tree,
in and out of every bed, in and out of doors.

The children cried, Stop, the children cried,
but the world was too far away,
and I was out walking with my hungry sister
finding words to express decay.

On the mountain's other side, the children
bruised the sky with words,
but the world was on heat for a strawberry blonde,
following the birds.

The plague walked on a thousand legs,
spawning for hours of the day and night,
and the children grew blisters under their armpits
that spread like potato blight.

I have been there, to the wrong side of the mountain,
and I have seen the vegetable, Death,
growing on the lips of children,
strangling their breath.

There the houses have broken doors,
the hinges stuck with rust,
and in every corner of the aching rooms
voices say only dust.

I have been there with my hungry sister,
finding words to express despair,
while the world was randy for a certain cloud
treading the unsure air.

Written in my left-handed book
are cruel words enough, and some beside;
while I was walking with my sister
the children died. Stop. The children died.

CHRIS BJERKNES

The Sponge of Space

delightful to laugh and cough by dreams
to sleep with the late thrush,
to be unawed by sea, and scrape the stars
tongue to be maggoted from the sun's
light,
but the blood blind in lilies

to forget more than the sparrows.
the indelicate wrens among the thistle
to follow leaves in labour ending
will and mind, with
the innocuous kiss of city
splined amid metallic boughs and ironic limbs
knowing that death is liberal and hatred
makes friends
and the deciduous ego
a kind of fungus sucks its food though
the flesh is dead and sleeps in its adobe
bed, and time still weaves the riddle
grass that feeds the globe
and the moth
in its tripartite flesh, perversity and
the question beg each with its insidious
purposes, the snivelling world with its
mucous air answers nothing.

NOEL WELCH

Poem

My hair is caught
In the claw of a bird
My eyelid is held
In its beak.
I cannot sleep
And all I see
Must transmute to song.
When I flag
It beats me
With a wing.
To be free
Not exposed anymore
To anything.
Will no one shoot
This relentless bird
But oh have care
Its heart is
The heart of my song.

ALEC CRAIG

Sodom

Gen. xviii, 23-33

Abraham sat with God on the high stools
and saw in the big mirror behind the bar
the whole of Sodom: Broadway and Piccadilly
the Arc de Triomphe and Red Square.

Abraham was a little tight because
God was always generous with the drinks
so far as Abraham was concerned.
And Abraham was sorry for Sodom
so with maudlin familiarity
he mentioned it to God. And God said:
"You have always been more worked up
about homosexuality than I.
If there are fifty who distinguish between
me and you—the maker and the made—
I will spare the city."

But Abraham noticed that God had not stopped
the white-coated fallen angels
from busying about the atom piles
and his old flesh shivered in the cosy bar.
He tried a haggle—he knew just the pitch of voice
that got God's Aural Aid to work. And God said:
"Murder in hot blood is not
far removed from the sinless anger
of Leviathan and Behemoth.
If there are forty who took no part
in the war-criminal trials
I will not destroy it."

But Abraham saw that the Son of the Morning
still waited outside. He tried again
and God said: "I was never hard on Odysseus
about his lies and his wooden horse—
information offices and propaganda.

If there are thirty who are not re-educating the
Germans
I will not do it."

The gin made Abraham lachrymose and a tear
ran camel-like from the oasis of his eye
across a ruddy desert to the forest
that had swathed the breasts of Sarah and of Hagar.
God saw it and said: "If there are twenty
who love Ishmael as much as Isaac
I will not do it . . . if you'll only cheer up
I'll halve it, old man. I'll make it ten."

The barman turned up the radio with which
he always hoped to drown the voice of God.
But like a lot of deaf people
God had a very loud voice;
and Abraham quite distinctly heard him say:
"If there are five who want no peace but mine
when Hiroshima and Nagasaki cry
to me from the ground, I'll switch off my Aural Aid."

God ordered another drink for Abraham
and left him gazing, a little bleary-eyed,
into the looking-glass . . .
You could never be quite sure
that you had got it really fixed with God.

GRAHAM T. ACKROYD

One

The Heart has no more aches
Than the body's breaks
Or an old man's senile flesh.

And a dead fish's dull scales
Have more lustre
Than a naked whore's back

The world moves slowly
On its rusted axis
So there's time to sit and stare
Time to take the bit
And gambol in the air.

How often have you loved
The real act of selfish
Prayer?

Time to sleep and pray
For the quick end of each futile
Day.

GEOFFREY MOORE

Poem

. . . and hee that will
Reach her, about must, and about must goe;"

I come not freely but with
Strange unsteadiness of
Purpose; I would not
Chop logic with you, sit
Face to glum face with you,
Bandy flat facts, "The trouble is . . ."

No, I would rather
Ride the cockhorse with you,
Stand under boughs, under clouds, with you,
Share without pointing,
Know without speaking.

It's the eye-dance which counts,
And the faint quick nod, and
Over the features light breaking:
The sweetest catch of a high-pitched thought.

Moments like these must be
Put out of mind, among months of
Mouthing the hoarse explanation,
Jingling the morning and weather cheerfully
Like threepenny bits in the pocket.

Because to be hoped for
Is never to come, is
Reverse of the capably negative, is
The supreme sin, great two-faced coin of the
Back-slapper, Fish-in-the-hand.

The times you come disguised to me,
Put face to glum face,
Bandy flat facts "The trouble is . . ."
I wait without hope and
Digress at a whistling task.

And when at last you call to me,
I come not freely but with
Strange unsteadiness of
Purpose; in the
Heart of the heart-leap even
There is fever, faltering.

ROBIN ATTHILL

Catullus XI

Furius and Aurelius, my friends
(ready to travel with me to the world's end
of India, where the orient wave
thunders on the beach, to the suave
Arabs or the dangerous Turks, to the seven-
tinged mouth of Nile, or over the heaven-
high Alps, where mighty Caesar fought
on the Rhine or against the backwood
Britons of the barbarous North)
ready to dare the Gods' worst mood,
to Lesbia take this harsh short
word: Let copulation thrive, call in
adulterers by the score,
no love's lost in the hot lust of a whore;
and all our love's yesterday forgotten now
like the flower fallen
at the field's edge, gashed by the passing plough.

CHARLES EDWARD EATON

Willow Rose

What will the summer be to you, rose or willow?
Spring was lilac, purple-fading from the start;
Its scent was valediction to terror in the heart,
And, with April past, that night you lay at rest upon your pillow.
But before you slept you knew the spring
Had brought the ultimatum of the purple dusk
When the first green deepens in the dark and the air is musk,
The eve and entrance of another blossoming.

Now you sense the summer when you wake at dawn,
And, appetent of what may befall, watch through the
window
The pliant, wind-patient branches of the willow,
The rose that sparks its red renewal on the lawn.

Though willow, like the lilac's incarnation, green above
their sleep,
Prolongs the comfort of a cherished grief,
The furled seduction of the rose's petal-sheath
Questions whatever past attachment you would keep.

But since it is not you, alone, that will impose
The red or green, whatever strength you choose to borrow,
Be spirited in joy, spontaneous even in sorrow,
The rose or willow soul of power, whatever time disclose.

OSWELL BLAKESTON

The Loved Ones

We love them dearly
We build them
little houses
We catch them feasting
on pollen and sunshine
We take their wings
We bring them flowers
We love them dearly
We bury them carefully
when they die
Sometimes we tear off
only one wing.

ANDREW SALKEY

(EXCERPT FROM A JOURNAL)

At first I was anxious. I became sensitive to my existence. The world at large frightened me. And one day I clearly remembered a cloud of dust descending on my head like surrealistic drapery which to the already asleep might have meant nothing but to me dark presentiment, and I began walking among the crowds on my hands and knees. Because the sun had shone far into nightfall, not noticing the petty quarrels that abounded in the fish-yards and rum-discussions bubbling over and frothing at the mouth of the city's rim, I thought very little of the nagging man asleep on the bosom of the beast, displaying no care for his tenancy. This man was to provoke the hour later on. I felt from then, that the situation was to be highly involved. I hated being warned and most of all by myself about myself. The day dragged on with darker tones blotting the prepared canvas.

I had now come to a house I had once frequented, this was the asylum of the age. The nights I had spent roaming the streets of Kingston were many and eventful. After awhile the cracks and crannies of these havens with their stinging effluvium of decay became identified with my existence. I then lived on the air like a hovering menace in a fairy tale. I sucked the bone to its embarrassed whiteness. But always thought of the marrow for tomorrow.

As these prancing thoughts were overtaking me, I saw an old man propped up in a corner having a fair share of the deadman's sleep. I watched him and saw that his sleep was a nervous one. I wanted to wake him but knowing that he would have demanded money from me, I thought better of my plan and walked on. As I went, I felt his eyes opening on me. Then I knew he was a strong man. He would have the rag-doll-end-of-life if it took him several centuries of being removed then re-entering. I realised at this moment how fenced in the wrong-sides had been. I started seeing the green-bay tree go limp in the warm sunlight. I began promising myself never to gaze into a mirror for the rest of the day. I ordered all my friends to go about breaking the symbols of reflection on our misery. Then the shifting monster passed through the city and dropped dung on the mile-

posts. It has been a long time since I walked alone and heard myself cry.

The haze never lifted. I always walked in crowds and lost the hour. All faces around were muddled as in a bad drawing. This drawing haunted me with icy fingers sticking into my broken ribs. An indeterminate attitude was taken to all items involved with nature. At this point I passed a lonely banana tree which was shooting a young tree-shoot and like my Mother moaning at my delivery, the stretching, ripping, tearless cries rang towards the heights of my dulled consciousness and made me remember that I too was involved in nature. On second thoughts, I am indeed sorry that this is reasonable.

The day ended on a dead note and I crawled into bed with a strange presentiment that I would be visited before dawn. The night found me tired and quite disposed to the laying bare of my cancerous inhibitions. I shifted in my sleep. This night's torture is still uppermost in my thoughts. The menacing, sleeping face was offering its accustomed enticements. I was born weak. When the cane was wrung of its final juice I was thought of as an experiment. Therefore the responsibility handed over to me for the safekeeping of my own existence was burdensome. And now I knew that I must escape. It has been this wretched way for the whole way. I have excellent company in other wrongly contrived creatures. To be honest about my birth, I should state the awful circumstance in which I found myself about to be born.

As I never contemplated my own birth and hardly could prove that my parents did, I have grown with the affirmed belief that I was a grand accident, not only upon them, but also on the age in which I was deposited. I also theorize that the slime of prenatal influnce had been too exposed in my parents to the acrimony of their age and day when the high-lanes were bedecked with banners flying, "The hour of 'to have and have not' is brittle but fashionable". And so I grew hating the white immobile hand of fate, dead on the waste-lands. This continued throughout the tense air admixing the waters with reds and blacks of helplessness. Suddenly I became enthralled with the mess. I now know how sweet the victory must have tasted to the man-beasts. My neck too was sacrificed. And for this reason I told my friend of my craving for graveyards. If I painted for the world as some living-dead do I would paint in bright colours only two types of pictures. They would be Genesis, refurbished by streaking in dead nations to start with instead of live, lying

God-Adams and a well dressed gentleman covering torn and rotting limbs. This last canvas would be a self-portrait.

I have become as acrid vinegar when the grape is thrown on the vineyard's floor. The path does lead to the grave having started from the mouth of indecision. I am now passing the same old man again. Now my heart goes out to him as my mother's did to me.

FROM WORDSWORTH TO THE CINEMA

Wordsworth—A Reappraisal ed. by GILBERT T. DUNKLIN (Princeton University Press, $3.00); *The Background to Modern French Poetry* by P. MANSELL JONES (Cambridge University Press, 18s.); *The Film of Murder in the Cathedral* by T. S. ELIOT and GEORGE HOELLERING (Faber, 25s.).

THE symbolist movement may be described as having its hidden roots in Wordsworth—a genealogical proposition which a reading of the three following books supports. Indeed, the whole course of modern poetry may be said to consist in the exchange of a "sound and fury, signifying nothing" for a "still small voice", intimating much. From artificial image to the personal symbol, from 'regulation' rhythm and conventional couplet to an individual music and a flexible rhyme: is not this the essence of contemporary poetics, and was it not Wordsworth who launched us on this quest?

The temperament of quietism, underlying Wordsworth's whole innovation is most originally examined by Lionel Trilling in his contribution to the Centenary Studies presented at Cornell and Princeton Universities (and distributed over here by O.U.P.). The disposition to attentive waiting, to a kind of patient listening awareness, is well brought out by Mr. Trilling, who compares this element in Wordsworth with the spirit of the *Pirke Aboth* (a book of the sayings of the early Jewish Fathers).

Further confirmation that Wordsworth's verse proceeded from a principle of "solitariness" are found in the essays of Dean Sperry and Professor Pottle; whilst for those who prefer more literary logistics there is Mr. Crowe Ransom's absorbing contribution, which tells us as much about poetry's constitution as it does about the work of the poet in question.

The whole symposium (which includes a study by the English 'guest-writer' Ifor Evans) is warmly to be recommended, and goes to show how far American critical writing, generally speaking, surpasses our own.

From Wordsworth we pass to the symbolists; but evolution for the philosophic critic and the academic scholar are something quite different. The first sees developments in poetry as various stages that serve to manifest the changes occurring in the human spirit: the second as a course to be traced and verified by reference to chronology of publication. Professor Mansell Jones is an author of the latter order, and his book "The Background to Modern French Poetry" (which takes its subject only up to 1914) is concerned with establishing to some degree the influential reading-matter of the symbolist poets from Baudelaire to Gustave Khan, Mallarmé, Laforgue and Stuart Merril. There are chapters, for example, on the influence of Swedenborg and Poe on Baudelaire and of Whitman on the whole symbolist movement. Certain of these are sadly inconclusive, not through any absence of thorough research, but rather from their author's reliance on hearsay, statements of influence or parallel statements of ideas in the work of the writers compared.

This, of course, is to treat verse as a vehicle of literal expression; and a method that ignores the assistance of what we term 'internal evidence' must, in such cases, be limited in results. Where, however, as with Baudelaire and Poe, we have the French poet's admission of influence, together with all other relevant facts, Professor Mansell Jones is most rewarding.

Indeed, his entire book must be regarded as a mine of interesting information, provided we are content to read without a decisive end in view. For those who at one time or another have been infatuated with the period covered by Professor Mansell Jones' research, this book will be especially welcome. For the searcher after certainties, or the student demanding value-judgments, there is little to be got from the work. Perhaps I could describe it as a kind of readable bibliography and literary chart, and leave the door open to those who care to enter.

Mr. Eliot's connection, as a poet, with the French symbolists is common knowlege. This relationship was brought into clearer focus for all who saw the film *Murder in the Cathedral,* and in the book (which contains the new text, and a preface, a piece by Mr. Eliot and his producer Mr. George Hoellering, as well as a number of excellent plates) we are able to examine, in the verse

of scenes freshly added, what amounts to the end of this affiliation.

Those who attended the showing of the film, and observed the powerful unostentatious manner in which the visual images supported the words, will have realised how far Mr. Eliot's mode of writing lent itself to this symbolism of the eye—the phrases, through their very indirectness, calling for interpretation through the sight. This is not so with the additional scenes, where the verse has a surface precision of statement that does not cry out for further clarification. Mr. Eliot himself, to some extent, does not seem aware of this difference, for in his Preface he asks our pardon if we find the quality of the new verse lacking, telling us that—for the sake of unity—he "had to imitate a style which [he] had abandoned as unsuitable for other purposes than that of this one play; and that to compose a pastiche of one's work some years later is almost as difficult as to imitate the work of another writer." It would appear, then, that Mr. Eliot believes that the new verse and the old verse are not so dissimilar in expression, but try as I will I cannot reconcile them. The lines, for the most part, are stripped of imagery, and a certain sorcery of vigorous obliqueness seems to have utterly deserted his writing. Even in the words for the women of Canterbury (the most colourful and vivid writing in both earlier and later styles) we see how thin and unsurprising are the few touches of concrete language. Compare, for example, as symbols of premonition "the housedog" that "howled all night" (new style) with "the torn girl trembling by the mill-stream (old style), "the fire [that] would not kindle" with "puss-purr of leopard, footfall of padding bear". The terror and the glory has departed from his language.

Without asserting that one can write by rule, Mr. Eliot shows a determined dislike for remaining 'in the dark' after the act. This being so, he has hardly ever bored us by repeating a once-effected success or annoyed us by committing an earlier error. While he retains this faculty, we can never anticipate his next production without an advance of interest and excitement.

DEREK STANFORD.

THE CASE OF THE CRACKING INCARNATIONS

Collected Poems; EDWIN MUIR (Faber & Faber 15s.). *Ten Burnt Offerings;* LOUIS MACNEICE (Faber & Faber 10s. 6d.)

EDWIN MUIR'S *Collected Poems* is quite an impressive volume, though it is ill-served by a quite incredibly inept and platitudinous introduction by J. C. Hall—a piece containing almost every reviewer's cliché one can think of, and a lot of incredible English to boot: "With a lesser artist this might have led to monotony; with Muir, although not without his own limitations, we are aware of a wonderful enrichment of experience. Today his poetry has, I feel, a special significance for us," etc., I know that good poetry nowadays does need a bush, but it staggers me to imagine what kind of people can possibly be attracted to it by this kind of incontinent clowning. But Mr. Hall is not content, even, with this; he goes further; he compares Mr. Muir with Blake—with whom Mr. Muir appears to have no affinities whatsoever—but, in the next breath, takes it back with equally bland aplomb: "and yet perhaps Muir's preoccupations have more in common with European, than with specifically English, ways of thought. Hölderlin, Kafka, Rilke—these are some of the writers who occur to us in reading his poetry, and they have all influenced his thought."!

I don't know why Rilke occurs to Mr. Hall,—perhaps because Mr. Muir has also written a poem about Orpheus and Eurydice —but it is quite clear why the others do. Mr. Hall knows very well that Mr. Muir has spent a lot of labour on translating Kafka, and that "Hölderlin's Journey" is one of his best-known poems.

This kind of rubbish is very annoying indeed, though it also has at times its humorous side. He solemnly quotes from the good Stephen Spender's autobiography to lend support to one of his arguments, and then has to add a footnote in order to correct Spender's—as usual—highly inaccurate reporting:—thus!—"Edwin Muir tells me that the symbol which impressed him in Rome was that of Incarnation, not Resurrection". Is this too not pretty staggering?

Mr. Muir's own integrity, of course, is all the clearer by contrast to the waffling of his admirers, and his reluctance to have anything to do with the preparing of this book—avowed, for some reason, on the blurb—takes on an understandable and

sympathetic irony. But why the publishers have chosen to stage this little comedy is beyond me.

Mr. Muir himself is a careful and scrupulous artist, and his better poems are very fine. I cannot see, though, that he is outside the contemporary tradition particularly, as Mr. Hall and other critics aver. On the contrary his preoccupations are very much the preoccupations of his contemporaries, and if his personal integrity has kept him apart from any group or movement, this might also be said of any other contemporary poet of any real stature. Mr. Hall's passage about Kafka, Rilke and Hölderlin might, for instance, with greater justice have been applied to Stephen Spender. And the group that revolved round Auden and New Verse only vaguely included Auden himself, whereas the frenetic attempts to pin Dylan Thomas to the board of the apocalyptics proved entirely abortive; he was never even caught in the net. Perhaps the nearest to genuine movements in contemporary poetry have been the Southern Group in America (Allen Tate, John Crowe Ransom, Robert Penn Warren, John Peale Bishop) and the group round Robert Graves here; these two groups have had many points of contact between each other as well as a reasonable amount of homogeneity within themselves and, strangely enough, the style and quality of Muir's writing has a great deal in common with them; he shares the same preoccupation with history—personal history in particular—and time; he shares the particular combination of private and local landscape allied to European and classical tradition which seems to me one of the great merits of contemporary poetry—and possibly the new thing in it—and one of its other greatest merits, a crisp and biting wit allied to a basically simple, colloquial style, he also shares to some extent. He is rather less witty than some, but he is nevertheless master of the appropriately resounding phrase or the neat metaphysical twist, when the occasion demands it, and his poems are always well-made. They are, however, not always very exciting. It appears almost that in his modesty he is so careful to avoid meretricious brilliance that he avoids any brilliance at all—a diamond that will not shine!—and he is accordingly not so easily rewarding a poet as Warren, Bishop, Tate, Ransom or Graves—or Yeats, whose particular majestic turns of phrase he also attains to, though in a minor key. His preoccupations, too, have the monotony of an obsession without the violence of an obsession, and his variations on his familiar themes lack the fire and excitement of the rather similar

preoccupations of Warren, for instance; they lack also—as well as the emotional drive—the intellectual sophistication which enables these other poets at their best to blend so powerfully the emotional and mental forces that go to make good poetry. Accordingly, although the best of his poems, are craftsmanlike and interesting, the total impression they leave is disappoining and they clearly lack the final touch of greatness.

If this criticism is severe, what have I left to say about MacNeice? His burnt offerings, alas! will go very little way to propitiate the gods, who must by now be wondering if the young man of Bagpipe Music and New Verse is lost to them forever. Muir's poems, whatever they lack in emotion and intellect, do have a certain sinuous strength from their precise and ascetic craftsmanship, but MacNeice's are sprawling and flat, and dull and clumsy in craft too. In these ten poems he pulls out all the stops, and runs through the whole gamut of his tricks, yet the result is an emptiness. The emotion is brittle, the informing intellect thin and weary; there are too many words and too little sense. Occasionally there is a touch of the old promise, but all too seldom. The sophistication is there, but the spark is lacking: the widely ranging mind—but it merely catalogues; the cynical eye, but it wavers sentimentally. Auden's departure knocked all the stuffing out of the New Verse boys. It did several bad things. It deprived us of his genius, and presented it to the shoddy culture of the U.S.A., where it can be of less use. And it deprived his lesser contemporaries of their backbone. It left the cultural field to the wimbly-wambly ministrations of Stephen Spender, on whose inept and earnest shoulders descended the mantle of the grand young man of English letters; and it left the farming of the literateurs unrestrainedly to Lehmann and his perennially new depth-charges. Auden might have stopped all this; and the only other who might have—MacNeice—has proved too dependent and weak a personality. Like the moon, he can only shine in a reflected light—and his sun has gone too far away. He has the gifts, but, I suppose, not—overworked though the word is—the genius. Misguided, fanatic, schoolboyish he may have been, but Auden was always alive and stimulating. Who is there to stimulate us now? And who anyway—of the poor handful of poetry readers left—is there willing to be stimulated? Mr. Hall, Mr. Sergeant, Mr. Scarfe, Mr. Stanford, Mr. Lehmann, even Mr. Durrell and Mr. Fraser now,—Mr. Dickinson, Mr. Pickles—Mr. Joob-Joob, Mr. Glugg-Glugg—you give yer penny

and yer takes yer choice; not stimulating—deadly—but possibly you likes it that way. And there's always Mr. Spender—so young, so new, so bare—for the part of handsome Jack the Giant-Killer or Don "Hot-Licks" Quixote and his six infirmary Blue Chargers! The world, as the lyric-writer once put it, is waiting for the sunrise: and by god, when it does, you'll find every damned one of them there, fanning away like billyoh.

Although not without our own limitations, we are aware of a wonderful enrichment of the leagues of phoney-baloney; so many promising starters seemed to have cracked up and fallen in with the band, and so many non-starters have muscled in, too. All I can say is, the pleasure is not mine. Is it yours?

NICHOLAS MOORE.

The Fanfarlo and Other Verse by MURIEL SPARK (The Hand and Flower Press, 3s. 6d.)

Poems in Pamphlet 1952 by MICHAEL HAMBURGER (The Hand and Flower Press, 1s.)

Of these two pamphlets, Mr. Hamburger's seems to me the more accomplished, but Mrs. Spark's the more exciting. The first shows that the poet has learned his craft—perhaps the hard way—and knows how to produce a given effect with the material at his hand; the second—in a manner which I cannot help feeling is feminine—often leaps out into the dark, to land with a tinkling of glass, amazingly, excitingly, destructively!

"The Fanfarlo", a longish ballad of nineteen pages which gives the book its title, seems to unbalance the pamphlet by its length and nature. It has a certain power, a wit that sometimes dares to be so sharp as to skip outside the proper bounds of poetry, an audacity which is refreshing even if startling. But in the end I am left feeling that I don't care very much who Samuel Cramer, Monteverde and Fanfarlo are, or what happens to them. They do not involve me in their drama, their dilemma. Yet, if one left it at that, or judged Mrs. Spark by such a piece of word-doodling as "The Grave that Time Dug", one would be doing an injustice to her specific talents; for in this book there is the opulent majesty of "Like Africa", the acute and critical percipience of "The Yellow Book", the sure-footed and sensitive Jacobean pastiche of "Persicos Odi". And these pieces show most

effectively the almost lapidary excellences of Muriel Spark, who is that rare creature among woman poets today—one who can stand aloof and enjoy her poetry, with no ripping out of hair or visceral mutilation. For that gay stoicism, I would like to salute her here. Mr. Hamburger's accomplished weakness is that he tries to put everything into his book—regardless of its importance to others than himself. For instance, his tiny pieces, "The Girl" and "The Reconciliation", though expertly-neat statements, are without poetic importance, and occupy the space he might have used for a true poem. His "Song for a Bonfire" covers exactly the same ground as Herbert Read's "September Fires", but far less effectively. Surely, the answer is that in a small pamphlet like this, the poet should use only his best, and should not ignore what has been done before?

I admire Mr. Hamburger most in such fine poems as "Evening", "Judas Iscariot", "Islands", "Derelict Street"—for here he shows us what we might have missed but for the loan of his eyes, which, at their best, are both informed and controlled. And I dislike most those verses in which he is didactic. There are few poets today who can put off their singing robes and put on their Master's gowns with profit to themselves or to their readers.

But the important thing is that these two books open new windows onto the scene of contemporary verse—a terrain which, we were told, had become largely desert scrub. But now we know that there is a countryside worth looking at, and the Hand and Flower Press is to be praised for letting its poets lead us to the window.

HENRY TREECE.

British Popular Ballads ed. by JOHN E. HOUSMAN (Harrap, 10s. 6d.)

THE task of the ballad anthologist is comparatively easy thanks to the five folio volumes of *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads* (1882-1898). The present excellent selection is drawn from James Child's great source books.

Ballads give joy to scholars because there are so many variants, and because many of the stories have international currency. (*Lord Randal,* which seems so Scottish, has been found in Czecho-Slovakia and Calabria). In his preface, Dr. Housman

very sensibly cuts the ground from the aesthetic essay-makers by suggesting that the original ballad is best determined by objective consistency in story telling: "it is unlikely that a later version brings a gain in narrative consistency for which there is no warrant in the original version." He also spoils fun for the "everyman his own artist" propagandists by saying that there is no evidence to show the ballads were communal compositions: "anonymous, oral, and therefore variable, rather than communal."

OSWELL BLAKESTON.

The Exiles by HENRY TREECE (Faber, 8s. 6d.)

TAKEN all in all, this is probably the best all-round book of poems which Mr. Treece has had published. In his earlier books, there were always good things to be found, but there was rather too much luxuriance and a tendency to belabour the reader with something of the good-humoured noisiness of the first Elizabethan clowns. The same fault was to be found in the work of George Barker and Dylan Thomas, and it can be seen in Peter Ustinov's parody in "The Love of Four Colonels", but in *The Exiles* it has almost gone, for which defenders of the Romantic Tradition in English Poetry can be profoundly grateful.

Henry Treece has always had the virtue of being able to project himself into the feelings of a historical or legendary character and in the verse play *The Tragedy of Tristram* which is in this book, he succeeds very effectively in giving new life to the old and over-written legend.

Lawrence Durrel appears to be an influence upon a number of poems with classical themes, and although there is one less successful relapse into the tortuous (the poem "Hamlet"), in general, he has selected only the better side of Durrell's work and absorbed it.

JOHN BAYLISS

WREY GARDINER

Journal 1950 (Continued).

Jan. 6th. Reading a catalogue of second hand books on the top of a bus going by the Green Park towards St. James's and work there was an item that immediately caught my eye—*The Unveiling of Timbuktu.* Having dreamed and read about Timbuktu for a good many years I thought—here it is. I remember that short flash of life in Tangier, the real difference between the grubby common-place of European clothing and the white fanatical poetry of the different continent that struck me like the haunting impression of a dream. After all my grandfather has been to Kumassi in 1896 backed by an army, just a couple of years after Joffre took possession of Timbuktu in the name of France. There is a long journey between Swinburne and Rossetti and Timbuktu and perhaps I shall be the only poet to bridge it. Let us be simple therefore in our desires and think only of the breasts of negresses which seem to have been the main image haunting missionary and traveller in Africa.

Jan. 10th. One remembers the date by writing cheques. I could write great poetry. I could go to Timbuktu. Rimbaud did both kinds of thing. I believe I am not so far from its realization. My novel is a trifling labour now almost forgotten. If I could only gather together the strings of the intrigue. Life resolves itself when the necessary book falls into our hands. The lips of life, the poem of achievement. The music of the solitary lecher, immured in his own pasture like an old bull ignoring death. Time and desire are enemies like light and darkness. The black night of humanity. The difficulty is to remain sufficiently sane and sober to paint the correct picture, tell the truthful tale. Let those who are afraid of truth shrink. I will tell it, even as I perish in the unknown of Africa, my love, my death.

Jan. 11th. A strange atmosphere these latter days surrounds me. Everything is changed. I am even having to move my room at the office because of the expansion of the educational department. Today I brought some of my pictures back to this inhuman flat in Beaufort Gardens. But certainly in this London garret I have changed for the better. I write poems. I dream of West Africa. I think of the old navel of the real world where men and women dance unashamed of art. The girls, Julia and Cynthia are scared at my project of a journey to Timbuktu. They keep up

their courage by a semblance of humour. But they know that the world is slipping from under them. Discovered today that two pages have been given up to me in a text book on modern poetry. How little Rimbaud would have cared for this. How little the birds of Africa care for poetry, for they are poetry, from Swinburne to Yeats, and Yeats to the bastards of today.

Jan. 12th. Met George Fraser at the French Pub. He is going to Japan. Who has not been to Japan? Also met there a little man in the pay of His Majesty's government with broken glasses mended with string who had been everywhere from Lake Chad to Tibet. He told he had just fallen out of a window. But he was more interested in a type who had contributed to the stealing of the Ascot Gold Cup and was subsequently a bicycling enthusiast in Cologne. Not only poets talk in pubs. Did not go to a party given by Mr. Peter Russell because I understood at a penultimate moment that people were going to read poetry, which is my idea of a terrible frustration of the good life. I like reading my own poems to myself in the silence of myself. I like wondering about the carrot of desire, alone, divorced from the friction of living, in my hermit's hut, for from the balance sheets of life we are dying of this devastating condition we call living.

Jan. 16th. Very sad. The old grey curtain of a certain wall-like kind of despair descends. It is the waiting and insufficiency of life that kills the still small flame of joy in the soul. All is change, but not escape. To live in the strange desert of Knightsbridge, a Saharan military post created by Wellington and Mr. Harrod is to fail despairingly at moments in matters of the spirit. Alan Ross is several hundred miles to the south-west in his oasis, but gives no sign of life. He has forgotten me. My wireless is still working. The weather is fine and healthy. But there are too many trifles, like the flies of the desert hovering round me. I want to look on beauty, lie with the love of eternity, write poetry in the deathly silence of the hot night. What I want I shall get. What I know and love I am. Everything in life must be thrust away, behind, except the white light of truth. You cannot buy love or truth, they have no connection with money. I want the pure line of the individual vision. I want the perfect light, the music of sound, taste and smell. The stars rise and drop from horizon to horizon. The wine glass is empty, the prayer said.